

## FEMA REGION V

### *short notes on planning #1*

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#### PROTECTING CRITICAL FACILITIES

While it is important to reduce or eliminate risks from various hazards throughout your community, there are several types of structures and infrastructure that are most important to protect. Damage to these **critical facilities** can impact the delivery of vital services, can cause greater damages to other sectors of your community, or can put special populations at risk.

Since each community is different, there is no exhaustive list regarding what should be considered a critical facility. However, a number of uses that are probably on nearly everyone's list include

- ☐ Fire stations
- ☐ Police stations
- ☐ Sewage treatment plants
- ☐ Water treatment plants and pumping stations
- ☐ Schools
- ☐ Day care centers
- ☐ Hospitals
- ☐ Retirement homes and senior care facilities
- ☐ Major roads and bridges
- ☐ Critical utility sites such as telephone switching stations or electrical transformers
- ☐ Hazardous material storage areas.

To determine the critical facilities with which you need to be concerned, you should be familiar with the existing and proposed land uses and how the loss of these uses can impact your community. You need to have a good working relationship with the transportation experts and utility companies, as well as having a good understanding of the geography and geology of your community. But this is only the start. Once you determine which sites are at risk, you then need to decide the best way to mitigate the risk.

Your planning team can look at such actions as relocating a facility, flood proofing, fireproofing, hardening a facility, or taking various preparedness actions to reduce the impacts of potential damage. Your two guiding principles should be that you will protect lives and reduce damages to the maximum extent possible.

Should your community wish to protect data regarding critical facilities for security reasons, we recommend that you check with your attorney to ensure that protecting this data does not violate your states "Freedom of Information Act." If the attorney approves protecting the data, we recommend that the data be placed in an appendix to the plan, which can be removed prior to general distribution. Also, remember that the Federal Government has a "Freedom of Information Act." Check with the FEMA Regional Office prior to sending the critical facility information, to ensure that the Federal "Freedom of Information Act doesn't require release of the information. Remember that the only information that you may protect is the location of the structures. Other discussions on critical facilities must be included in the plan.

*EXAMPLE:*

***VASSAR, MICHIGAN***

The City of Vassar (population 2,559) is located in the east-central part of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. It lies along the banks of the Cass River. The Cass River watershed drains 710 square miles with approximately 40 miles of the river upstream of Vassar and 20 miles downstream. Vassar recorded 26 floods between 1904 and 1997 of heights of anywhere from 1/10<sup>th</sup> of a foot to 11 feet above flood stage. In 1998, the City prepared a mitigation plan to guide their efforts to reduce flood damages.

An important part of the Mitigation Plan is the reduction of damages to critical facilities. They noted that flooding from the Moore Drain eliminates access to the M-15 Bridge which cuts the community in half and creates significant public safety, economic and social impacts. They also indicated that in major flood events well houses for the public water supply are threatened and the police station floods, necessitating the relocation of service.

To deal with the M-15 Bridge problem the City proposed three actions:

- Determine through a hydrological analysis the effects of relocating the Moore drain on downtown flooding and compare the effects of several different relocations.
- If the Moore Drain cannot be relocated, request that the Michigan Department of Transportation Raise M-15 eastward from Main Street to eliminate the frequent closings of the Bridge.
- Implement an annual clean-up program along the drain to ensure peak performance.

To deal with the flooding of the police station the City decided that the permanent Emergency Operations Center should be in the Public Works Building. Serious consideration is being given to relocating the Police Department to a building outside of the floodplain.

It was decided that there was adequate warning time to allow for the sandbagging of the well houses.